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**Testimony of
Natasha M. Pierre
Associate Legislative Analyst
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women
Before the
Judiciary Committee
Friday, March 24, 2006**

In Support of:

H.B. 5597, AAC Discrimination

S.B. 699, An Act Concerning Recognition of Foreign Contracts

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Committee. My name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Associate Legislative Analyst for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 5597, AAC Discrimination, which would clarify and update Connecticut's nondiscrimination laws to protect all its citizens regardless of their gender identity or expression.

Individuals are often harassed or discriminated against in several arenas, such as employment, education, housing, public accommodations and credit matters, because of the stereotypical belief about how men and women should act. While there is a CHRO

ruling¹ that discrimination against transgender people is prohibited under the sex discrimination laws, there is no clear statutory protection. This bill would provide such protection.

We oppose, as we are sure that you do as well, all forms of discrimination. Discriminatory acts against transgender individuals are about gender and social expectations about gender. One's gender identity and expression is a personal and private matter. No one should lose a job or be denied entry into school because of the prejudices of others. By including gender identity and expression in Connecticut's anti-discrimination laws, the legislature reaffirms the principle that people in our state may work and live without fear of discrimination, and reminds those who commit illegal acts out of prejudice that our society deplores their behavior and will not tolerate it.

S.B. 699, An Act Concerning Recognition of Foreign Contracts

We also support S.B. 699 that would provide same-sex couples who legally marry in another country or state the same benefits, protections and responsibilities that are granted to couples who have entered into a civil union under Connecticut law. The PCSW continues to support equal legal rights for same sex couples and believes this measure would provide protection to couples who have legally married elsewhere or who move to this state after obtaining a legal marriage in another jurisdiction.

Thank you for your attention and for allowing us to testify on these matters.

¹ *Declaratory Ruling on Behalf of John/Jane Doe.*